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National Handloom Day

Why in News

On the occasion of the **6th National Handloom Day** on **7th August 2020**, the Ministry of Textiles is organizing a virtual function in the wake of the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

The **first** National Handloom Day was celebrated in **Chennai in 2015**.

Key Points

- The date, 7th August, was chosen as the **Swadeshi Movement was launched** on the same date in the year **1905**, which was based on **Bal Gangadhar Tilak's ideology of swadeshi**.
- On this day, the **handloom weaving community is honoured** and the **contribution of this sector is highlighted**.
- **Objectives:**
 - To **generate awareness** about the handloom industry amongst the public at large and its contribution to socio-economic development.
 - To **protect India's handloom heritage** and to enable the handloom weavers and workers with greater opportunities.
 - To **ensure sustainable development** of the handloom sector thereby empowering handloom workers financially and instilling pride in their exquisite craftsmanship.

- **Significance:**

- Handloom sector is a **symbol of India's glorious cultural heritage.**

India's **soft power** has long been endorsed by the handloom and handicraft space. 'Saree diplomacy' and '**Khadi diplomacy**' are some such examples.

- The textiles and handloom sector in India is the **second-largest source of employment** to people, after **agriculture.**

According to the **Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20**, 31.45 lakh households are engaged in handloom, weaving and allied activities.

- It is an important **source of livelihood** in the country and a **key to women empowerment** as over 70% of handloom weavers and allied workers are women.

Steps Taken

- A **social media campaign** has been planned for the handloom weaving community.

All the Secretaries of the States, Textile Bodies like the **Central Silk Board, National Jute Board, e-commerce** entities, retail companies and designer bodies have been requested to amplify the campaign.

- The Prime Minister has **urged the people to use Indian handlooms and handicrafts and further spread awareness** to others as well.

The more the world knows about the richness and diversity of these products, the greater Indian artisans and weavers will benefit.

- Under **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, Handloom Export Promotion Council** (HEPC) is organising a **Virtual Fair**, connecting more than 150 participants from different regions of the country showcasing their products with unique designs and skills.

Various exquisite handloom products and numerous other **Geographical Indication (GI) Tagged** products will be displayed to attract the attention of international buyers.

- Other events include the **launching of a mobile app and backend website for Handloom Mark Scheme** (HLM), the **launching of My Handloom Portal**, etc.

HLM was **launched in 2006** with the basic objective to brand Indian handloom products and secure a premium position for them in domestic as well as international markets.

Handloom Export Promotion Council

- It is a **nodal agency** constituted under the **Ministry of Textiles**, Government of India.
- It was incorporated as a **not-for-profit company under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956.**
- **Aim:** To promote the exports of all handloom products like fabrics, home furnishings, carpets, floor coverings, etc.

Challenges

- Due to the Covid-19 induced **lockdowns**, norms of **social distancing** and the **resultant economic turbulence**, there are no handicraft and handloom exhibitions or markets.
 - It has **impacted incomes and the entire supply chains** involved in handloom and handicraft, along with **supplies of raw materials and unused inventory.**
 - According to the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)**, tribal handicraft and handloom worth Rs. 100 crore went unsold owing to the lockdown.
- **Natural calamities** such as the recent **Assam floods** also **impact the livelihoods** of artisans, especially in the silk clusters of the state.
- The sector also faces the issues of **cheap emulations, automated looms** which **threaten the sustenance of original arts and the timeless skills** of the weavers.
- The Centre has **abolished the All India Handicrafts Board, ending the one official forum where weavers and craftspeople could raise their voices** directly and were empowered to advise the government on policy and spending.
 - The move is in consonance with the government's vision of '**minimum government and maximum governance**' in the pursuit of achieving **good governance, leaner government machinery** and the **need for systematic rationalisation** of government bodies.

The government platforms for such direct interactions are **fastly reducing which is a cause for concern.**
 - The board was **established in 1952** and used to **advise the Ministry of Textile on development programmes** for handicrafts.

Suggestions

- There is a need to **promote the finesse of Indian weavers globally to communicate, disseminate and engage** with not just the global audience but the Indian diaspora as well.

- The **textile clusters should be encouraged in making masks and other medical equipment that uses textiles** such as bedsheets, etc. contributing to the medical infrastructure.
- Government programmes like **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, Vocal for Local** campaign and **Make in India** need to be popularised within the country to increase the domestic demand.
- **Corporate organisations** must buy products from **artisans for the purposes of awards, corporate engagement programmes, and business gifting** which will facilitate direct producer-consumer interface, thereby ensuring proper returns on the products to artisans.

Way Forward

- Initiatives such as the **Northeast Expo 2019** must be continued digitally so that states and the Centre have more online market portals for Indian handlooms, handicrafts and forest produce, as the sectors are interlinked.

The Northeast Expo 2019 through '**Tea and Khadi**' diplomacy helped in improving the trade ties with the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations** (ASEAN) and **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation** (BIMSTEC) nations.

- While the markets move online, it is **equally important for the artisans to get adequately equipped and trained** in operating online portals.
- **Online exhibitions through Indian embassies must be organised** to make the global audience aware of the rich legacy of handlooms and to honour artisans from India.

Source: PIB

Monetary Policy Report: RBI

Why in News

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has released the **Monetary Policy** Report for the month of August 2020.

The Monetary Policy Report is **published by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** of RBI.

- The MPC is a **statutory and institutionalized framework** under the **RBI Act, 1934**, for **maintaining price stability**, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- The MPC determines the policy interest rate (repo rate) required to achieve the inflation target (4%).
- The **Governor of RBI is ex-officio Chairman of the MPC.**

Key Points

Policy prescription
Some key policy decisions of the Reserve Bank of India

- No extension announced on loan moratorium beyond August 31
- Banks allowed to restructure stressed corporate and MSME loans
- Relief to individual borrowers at banks' discretion
- Borrowing limits against gold relaxed
- Tenure can be extended up to two years for personal loans
- ₹10,000 crore support for NHB, NABARD
- Start-ups included in priority sector lending norms

While space for further monetary policy action is available, it is important to use it judiciously to maximise the beneficial effects for underlying economic activity
SHAKTIKANTA DAS, RBI Governor

• Policy Rates Unchanged:

- **Repo rate** remains at 4% and the **reverse repo rate** at 3.35%.
 - **Repo rate** is the rate at which RBI lends money to commercial banks.
 - **Reverse repo rate** is the rate at which the RBI borrows money from commercial banks within the country.
- RBI has kept the policy rates unchanged **because of rising retail inflation levels.**
 - **Retail inflation (measured by the Consumer Price Index - CPI) rose to 6.09%** in June 2020 from 5.84% in March, breaching the central bank's medium-term target of 4±2%.
 - This **inflation range (4% within a band of +/- 2%) was recommended by the committee headed by Urjit Patel in 2014.**

- **Loan Restructuring:**

- RBI has allowed banks **to restructure loans** to reduce the rising stress on incomes and balance sheets of **large corporates, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** as well as **individuals**.
 - A large number of firms that otherwise maintain a good track record are facing the challenge as their debt burden is becoming disproportionate, relative to their cash flow generation abilities.
 - This can potentially impact their long-term viability and pose significant financial stability risks if it becomes widespread. It may also lead to an increase in **Non-Performing Assets**.
- However, **only those borrowers will be eligible for restructuring** whose accounts were classified as standard and not in default for more than 30 days with any lending institution as on 1st March, 2020.

All other accounts will be considered for restructuring under the **Prudential Framework** issued by the RBI in 2019, or the relevant instructions as applicable to specific categories of lending institutions where the prudential framework is not applicable.
- The restructuring efforts may or may not include a **moratorium on instalment repayments**. RBI has left the decision of moratorium on banks, with an eye on averting such loans from slipping into non-performing assets.
- The **loan restructuring scheme** will be worked out by a **committee headed by KV Kamath** (former ICICI Bank Chairman).

- **Liquidity Support:**

- An additional special liquidity facility of Rs.10,000 crore, equally to be split between **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** and the **National Housing Bank (NHB)** to help small financiers and home loan companies amid Covid-19 difficulties.

It can be noted that higher share of moratoriums are being availed by the retail borrowers which has created the need for such liquidity support to lenders.
- The liquidity facility to both NABARD and NHB will be offered at the policy repo rate.

- **Growth Projection:**

- Economic activity had started to recover from the lows of April-May 2020 following the uneven reopening of some parts of the country in June 2020.
- However, fresh **Covid-19** infections have forced renewed lockdowns in several cities and states, and economic indicators have levelled off.
- The recovery in the rural economy is expected to be robust, buoyed by the progress in kharif sowing.
- Manufacturing firms responding to the RBI's industrial outlook survey expect domestic demand to recover gradually from the second quarter of 2020-21 and sustain through the first quarter of 2021-22.
- For 2020-21 as a whole, real **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** growth is expected to be negative. Early containment of the pandemic may improve the outlook.

Link between Growth, Inflation and Interest rates

- In a fast-growing economy, incomes go up quickly and more and more people have the money to buy the existing bunch of goods.
- As more and more money chases the existing set of goods, prices of such goods rise. In other words, inflation (which is nothing but the rate of increase in prices) increases.
- **To contain inflation**, a country's central bank typically **increases the interest rates** in the economy. By doing so, **it incentivises people to spend less and save more** because saving becomes more profitable as interest rates go up.
- However, **when growth contracts, people's incomes hit**. As a result, less and less money is chasing the same quantity of goods. This results in either the **inflation rate decelerating** or it actually **contracts (also called deflation)**.
- In such situations, a central bank **decreases interest rates so as to incentivise spending** and by that route boost economic activity in the economy.
- In the **current Monetary Policy, RBI has not raised the interest rates even when retail inflation is high** because RBI is facing an odd situation at present: **GDP is contracting even as inflation is rising**.
- This is happening because the pandemic has reduced demand, on the one hand, and disrupted supply on the other. As a result falling growth and rising inflation are happening at the same time.

Source: TH

Economic Measures Taken by RBI

Why in News

Recently, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has taken various economic measures, which include **revising Priority Sector Lending (PSL) norms, increasing Loan to Value ratio (LTV) on gold loans** and introducing **online dispute resolution mechanism for digital payments**.

The PSL guidelines were last reviewed by the RBI in April 2015.

Key Points

- **Revised PSL Norms:**
 - Provides **PSL status to start-ups**.
 - **Increases the borrowing limits for the renewable energy sectors-** solar power and compressed biogas plants.
 - **Increased the targets for lending to 'Small and Marginal Farmers' and 'Weaker Sections'**.
 - Put in place the **incentive framework** for banks in order to **address the regional disparities in the flow of priority sector credit**.
- **Reasons for New PSL Norms:**
 - With a view to **aligning the guidelines with emerging national priorities** and bring sharper **focus on inclusive development**.
 - It has been done with the **aim to encourage and support environment-friendly lending policies** to achieve **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Priority Sector Lending

- The RBI mandates banks to lend a certain portion of their funds to specified sectors, like agriculture, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), export credit, education, housing, social infrastructure, renewable energy among others.
 - All **scheduled commercial banks** and **foreign banks** (with a sizable presence in India) are mandated to set aside 40% of their **Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANDC)** for lending to these sectors.
- The idea behind this is to ensure that adequate institutional credit reaches some of the vulnerable sectors of the economy, which otherwise may not be attractive for banks from the profitability point of view.

- **Loan to Value Ratio Increased:**

- Currently, loans sanctioned by banks **against pledge of gold** ornaments and jewellery for non-agricultural purposes should not exceed 75% of the value of gold ornaments and jewellery.
- However, with a view to mitigating the impact of **Covid-19** on households, RBI has decided to **increase the permissible LTV for such loans to 90%**.
- This relaxation will be available until 31st March 2021.
- Increase in LTV ratio will make banks and **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** more competitive as compared to money lenders.

However it also increases the risk of gold financing players as the gold is floating at record high level. Any fall in gold prices will increase defaults.

- **Offline Retail Payments Scheme:**

- RBI has unveiled a scheme of offline retail payments using cards and mobile devices to foster financial inclusion.
- There has been a considerable growth in digital payments using mobile phones, cards and wallets. However **lack of Internet connectivity or slow Internet**, especially **in remote areas, is a major impediment** in the adoption of digital payments.

- **Online Dispute Resolution:**

RBI has also Introduced an **Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) mechanism** for digital payments as the number of digital transactions are rising significantly giving rise to more disputes.

Source: TH

USA Opposes Cuba in UNHRC

Why in News

The **United States of America** has urged **United Nations** members not to support Cuba's bid to join the **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**.

Key Points

- The USA has accused Cuba of **“trafficking”** its doctors under the guise of humanitarian missions.
 - Cuba's **sale of medical services** is its **main source of foreign exchange**.
 - Cuba has a generally respected healthcare system with 90,000 medical workers for a population of 1.1 crore.
 - It has a **high life expectancy** (79.74 years in 2016) and a **low infant mortality rate** (around 4.76 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2013).
 - It also sends its doctors abroad to tackle outbreaks, as it did during the **Ebola epidemic of 2014-16** and **Covid-19 pandemic**.
- Cuba has applied to fill one of the **regional vacancies for 2021-2023**.
It was a member of the UNHRC in **2014-2016** and **2017-2019**.

- The USA and Cuba have had a strained relationship since the **Cuban Revolution** in



- The USA **severed diplomatic ties** with Cuba after the revolution.
- It had also placed a **trade embargo** on Cuba which was **eased in 2000** and again in **2014**. Travel restrictions, trade sanctions, restrictions on remittances to Cuba were partially lifted during these times.
- The sanctions were **reinstated in 2017**.
- The Cuba-US relationship also suffered during the **Cuban Missile crisis in 1962**.
- The USA **accuses** Cuba of **human rights violations** and **dictatorship** as it has a leftist authoritarian regime.
- A large number of Cubans have **migrated to the USA** after the Cuban revolution. This includes **supporters of the overthrown regime**, those whose **property had been confiscated** by the present Cuban socialist government and those in search of **better employment** and **living conditions**.
- Earlier, the **USA had also criticized Qatar and South Africa for accepting doctors** from Cuba to battle Covid-19.

It had also **blacklisted Cuba's defense minister**, accusing him of human rights violations and supporting socialist Venezuelan President.

India and Cuba

- India shares **close, warm and historical relations** with Cuba and both countries are founding members of the **Non-Aligned Movement**.

- In 1959, the Cuban-Argentinean guerrilla commander **Ernesto Che Guevara** paid a **diplomatic visit to India** and was welcomed by the then **Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru**.
- In 2019, India supported the resolutions in the **UN General Assembly** calling for lifting of US sanctions against Cuba..
- India and Cuba agreed to collaborate in the areas of **Biotechnology, Homeopathy and the traditional system of medicine** during the visit of the President of India to Cuba in 2019.

United Nations Human Rights Council

- **About:** The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a United Nations body whose mission is **to promote and protect human rights around the world**.
- **Function:**
 - **The main mechanisms of working of UNHRC are**
 - **Universal Periodic Review** mechanism which serves to assess the human rights situations in all United Nations Member States.
 - **Advisory Committee** which serves as the Council’s “think tank” providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues.
 - **Complaint Procedure** which allows individuals and organizations to bring human rights violations to the attention of the Council.
 - The Human Rights Council also works with the **UN Special Procedures** established by the former Commission on Human Rights.
The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective.
- **Membership:** The UNHRC has **47 members** elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis from 5 groups.
 - To become a member, a country must receive the votes of at least 96 of the 191 states of the UN General Assembly (an absolute majority).
 - The members are elected by direct and secret ballot for a period of **three years**, with a maximum of two consecutive terms.
 - In electing Council members, the resolution provides that General Assembly members “shall take into account the candidates’ contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and their voluntary pledges and commitments made thereto.”
 - The UNHRC holds **regular sessions** three times a year, in March, June, and September.

- **Recent:** The **US withdrew from UNHRC in 2018**, accusing it of bias and hypocrisy.
Venezuela in 2019 won a seat on the council for 2020-2022 despite criticism of its human rights record. This was also highly opposed by the USA.

Way Forward

- This attempt of the USA to prevent Cuba from joining UNHRC can further **strain the relationship** between the two countries.
- As a large population of **Cuban immigrants** and people with Cuban roots (0.58% of total US population in 2010) reside in the USA, it is for the sake of **democracy and spirit of internationalism** that the two countries make efforts towards reconciliation.
- As **India** is having ties with both the countries it will be difficult for it to maintain this status if the tension between the two countries escalates.

Source: TH

SFTS Infection in China

Why in News

Recently, deaths and infections have been reported due to the **Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (SFTS)** in **East China's Jiangsu and Anhui provinces**.

The new health threat emerges amidst the ongoing **Covid-19 pandemic** which also emerged in China first.

Key Points

- SFTS is caused by the **Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome Virus (SFTSV)** which belongs to the *Bunyavirus* family and is transmitted to humans

through **tick bites.**



- A **tick** called **Asian Longhorned Tick (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*)** is believed to be the **primary vector** (carrier) of the virus.
- The virus is often **transmitted to humans from animals** like goats, cattle, deer and sheep and **regular contact with these animals makes farmers, hunters and pet owners vulnerable** to the disease.
- Despite being infected by the virus, **animals generally do not show any symptoms** associated with SFTSV.
- **Origin and Spread:**
 - The virus was **first identified in China over a decade ago** and the **first few cases** were reported in rural areas of Hubei and Henan provinces **in 2009.**
 - Researchers identified the virus by **examining blood samples obtained from a cluster of people exhibiting similar symptoms.**
 - The virus eventually **travelled to other East Asian nations**, including **Japan and South Korea**, significantly raising the total number of cases.
 - **Due to more awareness about the health risks posed by tick bites**, the fatality rate of the infection has started to drop significantly.
- **Incubation Period:**
 - It is the **interval between being infected and showing symptoms.** For SFTS, the incubation period is **anywhere between 7 and 13 days.**
 - The disease usually **spreads between March and November** and the total number of infections generally **peaks between April and July.**

- **Symptoms:**

- Fever, fatigue, chill, headache, nausea, myalgia (muscle pain), diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain, gingival haemorrhage, conjunctival congestion, etc.
- **Early warning signs** include severe fever, **thrombocytopenia** (low platelet count) and **leukocytopenia** (low white blood cell count).
- More **serious cases** include multi-organ failure, hemorrhagic manifestation and the appearance of symptoms related to **Central Nervous System (CNS)** diseases.

The CNS consists of the **brain and the spinal cord** and it controls most functions of the body and mind.

- **Prevention:**

- **Avoid wearing shorts** while walking through tall grass, the woods, and any other environment where ticks are likely to thrive.
- **Using tick-repellent lotions and sprays** on the exposed body parts.

- **Treatment:**

There is **no vaccine to treat the disease yet**. However, the **antiviral drug Ribavirin is known to be effective** in treating the illness.

Ribavirin is also used to treat **Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF)** which is also **transmitted by ticks**.

- **Current Case Fatality Rate:**

- It rests between **approximately 16%-30%**.
- SFTS has been **listed among the top 10 priority diseases blueprint** by the **World Health Organisation** (WHO) due to its fast spreading rate and high fatality rate.
 - **WHO's Research and Development Blueprint** identifies diseases and pathogens that have the **potential to cause a public health emergency but lack effective treatments and vaccines**.
 - This watchlist for priority research and development includes **Ebola**, several other hemorrhagic fevers, **Zika**, **Nipah**, **Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)** and **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** and **disease X**, which represents the need to prepare for an **unknown pathogen** that could cause a serious epidemic.

Source: IE

Abanindranath Tagore

Why in News

The **National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), New Delhi** has organised a **virtual tour** titled “**The Great Maestro - Abanindranath Tagore**” to commemorate the **150th birth anniversary of Abanindranath Tagore** on 7th August 2020.



Key Points

- **Birth:** Abanindranath Tagore took birth in a **family of Tagores of Jorasanko in Kolkata in 1871.**
 - He was a **nephew of Rabindranath Tagore.**
- **Abanindranath Ideology:**
 - In his youth, Abanindranath **received training in European and Academic style from European artists.**
 - However, during the last decade of the **19th century**, he developed **distaste for the corporeality of European naturalism** (which represented things closer to the way one sees them - inspired by the principles of natural science).
 - **Mughal miniatures** influenced his visual ideas deeply.
 - Another source of inspiration came from the **visit of the Japanese philosopher and aesthician Okakura Kakuzo** to Kolkata in 1902.
 - He leaned towards painting images with historic or literary allusions.
- **Prominent Figure of Modern Indian Art:**
 - Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a stronger connection was established between art and nationalism. Many painters tried to develop a style that could be considered both modern and Indian.
 - **Raja Ravi Varma** was one of the first artists who tried to create a style that was both modern and national.
 - He mastered the Western art of oil painting and realistic life study, but painted themes from Indian mythology.
 - However, in **Bengal**, a new group of **nationalist artists gathered around Abanindranath Tagore.**
 - They **rejected the art of Ravi Varma** as imitative and westernised, and declared that such a style was unsuitable for depicting the nation’s ancient myths and legends.
 - They felt that a genuine Indian style of painting had to **draw inspiration from non-Western art traditions**, and try to capture the **spiritual essence of the East.**

- **Bengal School of Painting:**

- It is also called the **Renaissance School or the Revivalist School**, as it **represented the first modern movement of Indian art**.
- It rediscovered the glories of Indian art and consciously tried to produce what it considered a truly Indian art inspired by the creations of the past.
- Its **leading artist was Abanindranath Tagore** and its theoretician was E.B. Havell, the principal of the Calcutta School of Art.
- They broke away from the convention of oil painting and the realistic style, and turned for inspiration to **medieval Indian traditions of miniature painting** and the ancient art of **mural painting in the Ajanta caves**.
- They were **also influenced by the art (wash technique) of Japanese artists** who visited India at that time to develop an **Asian Art movement**.

- **Associated Pupils:** Nandalal Bose and Kshitindranath Majumdar
- **Popular Paintings:** Bharat Mata, My Mother, Journey's End, etc.
- **Popular Books:** Rajkahini, Nalak, etc.
- **Death:** He died on 5th December, 1951.

National Gallery of Modern Art

- NGMA was established in **1954**, at the Jaipur House, New Delhi.
- It is run and administered as **a subordinate office to the Ministry of Culture**, Government of India.
- One of its objectives is to acquire and preserve works of modern art from the 1850s onward.

Source: PIB

Schizophrenia and its Possible Cause

Why in News

Recently, the **Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF)** and **Jeevan Stem Cell Foundation, Chennai** have carried out a pilot study on people of specific ethnicity with **schizophrenia**.

The study finds an **association of specific alleles** (variants of specific genes) **with the disease**.

Schizophrenia

- It is the descriptive term for a **group of psychotic disorders in which personal, social and occupational functioning deteriorate as a result of disturbed thought processes, strange perceptions, unusual emotional states, and motor abnormalities.**
- It is a **debilitating** (making someone very weak and infirm) disorder. The **social and psychological costs** of schizophrenia are **tremendous**, both to patients as well as to their families and society.
- **Onset:** It typically begins in **late adolescence or early adulthood.**
- **Symptoms:**
 - **Positive Symptoms:** These are **pathological excesses or bizarre additions** to a person's behaviour like delusions, disorganised thinking and speech, heightened perception and hallucinations and inappropriate affects.
 - **Negative Symptoms:** These are **pathological deficits** and include poverty of speech, blunted and flat affect (Showing less or no emotions), loss of volition (inability to start or complete a course of action) and social withdrawal.
 - **Psychomotor Symptoms:** Less spontaneous moves or making odd grimaces (extremely distorted and particular facial expression) and gestures.
- **Causes:**

Schizophrenia's cause is not exactly known yet. There are various studies among groups of varied ethnicities across the world, on the possible causes and other relations.

 - These **studies have shown associations of the disease with different alleles** related to the **Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA).**
 - HLA is an important part of the immune system and related to a **group of genes on chromosome six.**
 - HLA genes are **extremely variable** and are very **different across human populations.**
 - However, the **specific allele** that was found to be associated with schizophrenia **varied from group to group.**
- **Treatment:**

Therapy and support can help people learn social skills, cope with stress, identify early warning signs of relapse and prolong periods of remission.

Key Points

- **Findings of the Current Study:**

- It holds that HLA is important for the proper functioning of the immune system and its **variations can lead to immunological abnormalities.**

In **autoimmune diseases**, when the body creates **antibodies against the NMDA receptors** in the brain, these antibodies disrupt normal brain signalling and cause brain swelling or encephalitis affecting both men and women and can lead to schizophrenia.

The **N-methyl-D-aspartate (NDMA) receptor** is a glutamate receptor and ion channel protein **found in nerve cells** and is **important for memory functions.**

- Researchers found a **higher frequency of HLA class I alleles** in individuals with schizophrenia.

Individuals carrying these alleles **could be susceptible** to schizophrenia.

- They also found a **negative correlation with some alleles** which were found in **lower frequency** in individuals with schizophrenia.

These could be **protective alleles** in schizophrenia.

- For the first time, the **amino acids level in HLA molecules** among the patients were also studied.

- Researchers held that the **reasons or causes for schizophrenia are not entirely clear**, but **perhaps selection and ‘memory’ of past selection pressures** (infections) play a role in its onset.

However, there is a need for further studies of the exact factors causing the disorder. The occurrence of different alleles itself is not a problem but finding the exact allele causing it, is a challenge.

- Earlier studies had indicated that **different alleles may be involved in different ethnic groups.** For example, studies in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Japan point to involvement of different alleles responsible for risk factor to schizophrenia.

Source: TH

75th Anniversary of Hiroshima Bombing

Why in News

Japan marked 75 years of the atomic bombing on Hiroshima on **6th August, 2020.**

Survivors, relatives and foreign dignitaries attend the anniversary of Hiroshima every year to honour victims of the bombings and call for **world peace.**

Key Points

- **About:**

- On **6th August 1945**, a US bomber dropped the **uranium fission bomb**, codenamed **Little Boy**, on **Hiroshima**, a city in Japan.
- Three days later it dropped another bomb codenamed **Fat Man**, on **Nagasaki**.
- The explosion and resultant firestorms are believed to have killed around 80,000 people in Hiroshima and around 40,000 people in Nagasaki.
- Thousands more died in the following years due to the **exposure to radiation** from the blast and also from the **black rain** that fell in the aftermath of the explosions.
- **Long-term effects** of the attack included birth defects, malnutrition, cancer and other illnesses
- This bombing marked the end of **World War II**, with **Japan surrendering** to the **Allies** on 14th August 1945.
 - The Allies were one of the two major alliances during World War-II, led by **Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union**.
 - The other alliance, **Axis** was led by **Germany, Italy, and Japan**.

- **Aftermath:**

- The attacks were widely criticized around the world for being **crimes against humanity**.
- Some historians argue the **bombings ultimately saved lives** by avoiding a land invasion that might have been significantly more deadly.

The United States has never apologised for the bombings.
- However, in Japan, the attacks are widely **regarded as war crimes** because they targeted civilians indiscriminately and caused unprecedented destruction.
- After the war, Hiroshima tried to reinvent itself as a **City of Peace** and continues to **promote nuclear disarmament** around the world.
- The survivors of this attack are known as "**Hibakusha**", many of whom suffered physically and psychologically after the attack.
- Japan's wartime experience has led to a **strong pacifist movement in the country**. At the annual Hiroshima anniversary, the government usually reconfirms its commitment to a **nuclear-free world**.

Japan signed the **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons** in February 1970.

Way Forward

- The 75th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki reminds us of the power that nuclear weapons possess. In present times, we have much more powerful bombs, like **Hydrogen bombs**, which can unleash much more massive destruction than the nuclear bomb.

- Division, distrust and a lack of dialogue threaten to return the world to unrestrained strategic nuclear competition. Though **Non-Proliferation treaty** and **No First Use Policy of India** are significant steps, much needs to be done to totally **eliminate the danger of nuclear war.**

Source: TH

Tsunami Ready Programme: UNESCO-IOC

Why in News

Recently, the **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO** (also known as UNESCO-IOC) has **approved the recognition of two communities of Odisha viz., Venkatraipur and Noliasahi as Tsunami Ready Communities.**

With this recognition, India has become the **first country in the Indian Ocean Region** to achieve the honor from the UNESCO-IOC.

Odisha is the **first state in India** to have such recognised communities.

Key Points

- **Tsunami Ready:**
 - It is a **community performance-based programme initiated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO** to promote tsunami preparedness through active collaboration of public, community leaders, and national and local emergency management agencies.
 - The **main objective** of this programme is to improve coastal community's preparedness for tsunami emergencies, to minimize the loss of life and property and to ensure a structural and systematic approach in building community preparedness through fulfilling the best-practice indicators set by the **Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (ICG/IOTWMS) of UNESCO-IOC.**

- **Implementation in India:**

- Tsunami Ready in India is implemented by the **National Board (Ministry of Earth Sciences- MoES)** under the **Chairmanship of Director, Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Centre (INCOIS)** with members drawn from MoES, **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), Andaman & Nicobar Islands Directorate of Disaster Management (DDM) and INCOIS.
- **INCOIS (an autonomous body under the Ministry of Earth sciences)** is also **providing tsunami advisories to Indian Ocean region (25 countries)** as a Tsunami Service Provider as the responsibility assigned by UNESCO-IOC.
 - The **Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC), INCOIS is the nodal agency to provide tsunami advisories to India.** It is coordinating with the Disaster Management Officials (DMOs) for implementation of Tsunami Ready programme in India.
 - It conducts **IOWave Tsunami mock exercises biannually** in coordination with ICG/IOTWMS and also conducts **mock exercises at national level in alternative years** in coordination with MHA and NDMA and State Disaster Management Agencies (SDMA) to strengthen the readiness to handle the emergency situations with stakeholders.

Tsunamis

- The word tsunami is a **Japanese word**, represented by two characters: tsu, meaning, "harbor", and nami meaning, "wave".
- The tsunami waves behave very differently in deep water than in shallow water as their **speed is related to the water depth.**
- They **frequently occur in the Pacific**, where dense oceanic plates slide under the lighter continental plates. When these plates fracture they provide a vertical movement of the seafloor that allows a quick and efficient transfer of energy from the solid earth to the ocean.

Source: PIB

Volcanoes on Venus

Why in News

According to a recent study, published in Nature Geoscience, **Venus is still geologically active.**

Key Points

- The study identified 37 active **volcanoes**, in the form of ring-like structures known as coronae, on the surface of Venus.
The coronae form when plumes of hot material deep inside the planet rise through the mantle layer and crust.
- Earlier, it was believed that the surface of Venus had no geological activity. However, scientists have known for some time that Venus has a younger surface than planets like Mars and Mercury, which have cold interiors.
- The new study will help to identify target areas for future missions such as **Europe's EnVision** that is scheduled to launch in 2032.
EnVision aims at determining the level and nature of the geological activity and the sequence of events that generated the surface features of Venus.

Venus

- It is the **second closest planet to the sun** and the **sixth-largest planet** in the solar system. It is also known as **earth's twin**.
 - It is the **hottest planet in the solar system** and its **extreme temperatures (450° C)** and acidic clouds make it an **unlikely place for life**.
 - **Along with Uranus it spins backwards** with respect to other planets i.e. Its **sun rises in the west** and sets in the east.
 - Along with Mercury it has **no moons and no rings**.
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